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MAJORITY LEADER ANNOUNCES WORKING GROUP ON CYBER SAFETY

WASHINGTON – Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi today announced the establishment of the Senate's Critical Infrastructure Protection Working Group (CIP). The new CIP Working Group will serve as a central clearing house for information on cyber safety and critical infrastructure protection issues and efforts to address them.

Senator Bob Bennett of Utah, chairman of the Senate Y2K Committee and of the Senate Republican High Tech Task Force, will chair the new working group.

Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania and Senator Spencer Abraham of Michigan will serve as co-chairmen of the group.

"High tech has brought advancement in education, communications, and the economy, but some real safety issues have emerged as well," Lott said. "Recent hacker attacks on major e-commerce and government web sites demonstrate the importance of information security to a well-functioning economy and a free society. This new working group will help provide communication that will lead to increased awareness and coordination."

Bennett said, "The interconnectivity and advanced capabilities of U.S. computer systems makes the United States more vulnerable to cyber attacks than any other nation in the world. Such attacks could bring the U.S. economy to its knees. To prepare to meet this threat, CEOs and CIOs must be made aware of its severity and have access to the most up-to-date, comprehensive information available. The CIP Working Group will serve as a central repository for this information and coordinate efforts to increase national awareness. The challenge of information warfare extends across organizational, industrial and jurisdictional lines. To meet it, we must think horizontally."

Santorum said, "In this information economy where high tech is a driving force, the safety, privacy and integrity of information is a top concern of all Americans. I look forward to working with my colleagues to facilitate discussions and new initiatives addressing cyber safety issues."

Abraham said, "Cyber security and on-line integrity are first among the many high-tech issues that government, industry and consumers must address to continue the success of our growing E-economy. This working group will be a valuable resource to keep everybody up to date and on the same page as we tackle these problems."

Other members of the working group include: Senate Committee Chairmen Phil Gramm of Texas, Banking; Orrin Hatch of Utah, Judiciary; Jesse Helms of North Carolina, Foreign Relations; John McCain of Arizona, Commerce; Frank Murkowski of Alaska, Energy; Richard Shelby of Alabama, Intelligence; Robert Smith of New Hampshire, Environment and Public Works; Ted Stevens of Alaska, Appropriations; Fred Thompson of Tennessee, Governmental Affairs; and John Warner of Virginia, Armed Services. Other members are Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, Senator Pat Roberts of Kansas and Senator Judd Gregg of New Hampshire.

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<http://www.senate.gov/~bennett>